

# The Builder.

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**I**N this eventful moment in the history of our country, it is the duty of every man whose voice is listened to, to raise it in defence of order, and for the condemnation and dispersion of doctrines tending to array class against class, to render capital insecure, destroy public credit, and plunge the whole nation into anarchy and distress. London passed nobly through the ordeal of Monday last: it afforded a grand and gladdening spectacle to the friends of humanity and advocates of national progress and amelioration, and shewed the advantages that are to be derived from extended education and liberal institutions.

The building operatives displayed for the most part an excellent spirit, and entitled themselves to the admiration of their countrymen, as they have done on many previous occasions. The great majority of them know perfectly well that the interests of the employers and the workmen are indissolubly connected: that public order and security for property are as essential to their own prosperity and well-being as they are necessary for their masters', and are most careful to conduct themselves with that end in view.\* It has become apparent, however, to us, and to all lookers-on, that, amongst a section of them, doctrines are most industriously circulated calculated to lead to very distressing results. The demands of various bodies of operatives, recently promulgated in various parts of the country, include many of the impracticabilities and injustices now involving the French Provisional Government, and France herself, in the greatest confusion and distress.

We have good reason to believe that we possess the confidence of the thoughtful and intelligent portion of the building operatives, and that they know us to be their earnest friend and warm advocate. They know well that we have ever shewn an anxious desire to promote their interests and aid their advancement, and our doings have been but a faint reflex of our feelings. We may risk the loss of this confidence, by the assertion which, nevertheless, we

are bound to make, that those who prompt them to demand legislative limitation of the hours of labour and the amount of pay; protection against machinery (a long ago exploded error); and the abolition of the middle-man system, all which we find set forth in reports of various meetings of trades' delegates,—are not the friends of the industrial classes. Those who urge them to do this may honestly believe that they are advising rightly, but if so they act in ignorance, and most earnestly we caution our readers, that they may not hastily commit themselves to a course which would bring increased distress and more widely-spread destruction.

To prevent a man who is his own master from rising early in the morning or working late in the night, when employment is offered him, is manifestly impossible, and, if it were possible, would be unjust and tyrannous. The competition of workmen amongst themselves will not be restrained by the will of the masters or the dictum of the legislature.

In previous articles we have alluded to the result of legislative protection of labour in France. The much talked-of "organization of labour" there, means disorganization of labour. Capital has taken flight, trade is at a stand-still, and ruin stares all in the face. For the love of God and our country let us do nothing to bring about such a state of things in England.

The revival of a war against machinery amongst us is out of the question. In Leipzig we hear it has commenced furiously. The printers, for example, (who ought to know better) have declared that they will destroy the establishments of those masters who have more than one press out of every six working by machinery. Sapient blockheads! Have they ever considered what the condition of the world would have been if the medieval copiers of books had succeeded in preventing the introduction of the first machine for printing? Or how many thousands of men were put into work by at first throwing a few individuals out of it? We give our own operatives, however, the credit of having mastered the truth here involved; and we will not regard the cry for protection against machinery as seriously made.

The demand for the suppression of middle-men—of masters, in fact,—for, short of this, if the principle be admitted, there is no stopping,—equals the last in absurdity. Are intelligence and skill, and capital—the result of these—to have no reward, and no opportunity of bringing into productive action the labour of less able hands, which, without their intelligence and capital, must remain unproductive? And where are you to stop? If the small master—the sub-contractor—is not to be permitted to come between the workmen and the general contractor, on what ground will the general contractor be permitted to come between the workmen and the employer?

\* The *Democratic Party* says,—"A general bankruptcy is imminent, and the Provisional Government, struck with stupor, postpones the most urgent measures to the opening of the Constituent Assembly. In the meantime the workmen are in a state of disorganization; each day thousands of workmen are thrown upon the streets, and when the Constituent Assembly shall meet, it will find itself in possession of 300,000 men and women without work and without bread." The *syndicalism* of the Orleans Railway by the Government has caused much discontent and fear. One of the "clubs" has since advised the Government to take possession of the Bank of France, the Insurance Companies, all railroads, canals, mines, and minerals! The stoppage of trade in Paris is operating on England. We understand that at Leeds, during the past week some of the leading firms engaged in the iron and machine making businesses have discharged a large proportion of their hands, in consequence of orders, which were in progress for France and other parts of the continent, having been countermanded. Thus, added to the reflux of silk and flax workers from France, causes a considerable number of persons to be now out of employment in Leeds. Ultimately, however, if England hold her own, she will be benefited.

As we said before, therefore, the demand is for the abolition of masters altogether. Let this be done, and contemplate with calmness, if you can, the inevitable result. It is by means of accumulated capital that all our advances have been made: without it we should fall into a state little superior to that of barbarous nations. "Capital," says the *Paris National* in a recent article, as if the truth had but just dawned on the writer, "is but the result of the savings of labour. And, on the other hand, by the aid of capital it is that labour becomes developed, more perfect, more active and fruitful. What is more, in the present state of things, the rights of property being mixed up with all that exists, capital is absolutely necessary to labour. The relations between capital and labour are neither more nor less than the bases of social order, the foundation of civilisation. Let labour stop, and capital becomes unproductive: let capital withdraw and labour ceases." Without capital, and without enterprise (which accumulations of capital produce), large undertakings involving risk, and slow in return, would never be engaged in. "The hope of profit," says Charles Knight, "acts the capital to work, and the capital sets the labour to work. If there were no capital there would be no labour. Capital gives the labourer the power which he has not in himself, of working for a profit." And, again, "Whatever tends to make the state of society insecure, tends to prevent the employment of capital. In despotic countries, that insecurity is produced by the tyranny of one. In other countries, where the people, having been misgoverned, are badly educated, that insecurity is produced by the tyranny of many. In either case, the bulk of the people themselves are the first to suffer, whether by the outrages of a tyrant, or by their own outrages. They prevent labour, by driving away to other channels the funds which support labour."

On higher ground, however, than the certainty of the evil returning to themselves, we implore the operatives to weigh well their actions, and avoid any step tending to make property insecure, and prevent the employment of capital. We will not pretend that no alterations in the government and constitution of society are necessary. With the statement before us that of the 200,000 artisans and mechanics at present in London, only one-third are in any degree satisfactorily occupied, one-third employed but half their time, and the remaining third entirely out of work, and in a state of pauperism,—coupled with the accounts of distress which have been forwarded to us from Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Birmingham, and other large towns, such an assertion would be childish and insulting. Their complaints must receive the most patient consideration; the causes to which the distress may be attributed, must be subjected to the most severe and sifting inquiry by men who know that labour has its rights as well as capital, and are prepared to make these rights clear, and protect the operatives in the exercise of them.

Much may be done by you yourselves, to bring about the desired end; get knowledge, cultivate your understanding, and your tastes: be orderly, industrious, and good. Set forth your grievances by all constitutional means, and rely upon a speedy attainment of justice: but as you would avoid involving all in one common ruin, be not led into a hopeless and destructive contest for objects which would be

\* At a meeting of the committee of the Builders' Society, held at the Freemasons' Tavern on the 4th, it was resolved—"That it is of great importance that those who are anxious to preserve good order and to maintain the peace of the metropolis, should, at the present time, publicly manifest their desire to uphold the authority of those who are intrusted with the preservation of the public peace. That, with this view, it is expedient that the numerous and important body of men engaged in the various departments of the building business should enrol themselves as special constables in the various localities in which they are engaged, the preservation of order being of vital importance to the employed as well as to the employer. That we, the undersigned, invite all persons in our employ to co-operate with us in the discharge of this important duty.—Thomas Collett, Henry Lee and Son, Armstrong and Smith, John Holt, William Cubitt and Co., Howard and Nixon, J. and C. Higby, Samuel Grimdell, Thomas Rider, John Seward and Son, T. J. Stephens, W. Norris, J. and O. L'Anson, T. and W. Pigg, W. Lawrence and Sons, Joseph Griffiths, I. Unwin, H. Hicks, Haynes and Co., J. and O. Massey, Seth Smith, Thomas Ormsell, Colebatch and Marsh, Richard Ashby, J. French and Son, George Bird and Co., John Rumbert, Sherrin and Co., John Jeff, D. Nicholson, W. Myers, H. Burton, B. and N. Sherwood, Edward Mitchell, S. Stevens, A. Lucy, S. McCarrey, E. Waller, W. King, John Spicer, J. Hutchinson, H. Clarke, G. Greenfield, James Jordan, Baker and Son, J. and H. Bird, J. G. Davis, Joseph Beahy, E. Umfrenall, Charles Pease, James Harger, Locke and Nisbain, Windland and Holland, L. and G. Mansfield, L. Lawrence and Son, G. Myers, M. Patrick, T. W. Hartley, James Wilkinson, James Talloch, George Pink, James Chisholm, J. and W. Bennett, J. Fryer, P. Newell and Sons, Francis Reed, Herman and Son, John Mowley." A large number of men, were in consequence returned, and acted efficiently.